

VTT Connects In New Way with Battle Staff NCO Course Students

By Martha C. Koester - NCO Journal

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Sgt. 1st Class Khambao Mounlasy, a VTT instructor, says he values sharing his experience with noncommissioned officers out in the field. Mounlasy spoke with students and tries out the functions of the new enhanced equipment. (Photo by Martha C. Koester / NCO Journal)

The U.S. Army Video Teletraining Program for the Battle Staff Noncommissioned Officer Course at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas, has long since established its reputation as a cost-effective program.

VTT eliminates the need for students' temporary duty assignments and allows one instructor to teach many Soldiers at remote locations. Its savings benefits just grew as the nonresident training program recently eliminated a third-party contracting agency, which connected all sites, in favor of a more direct connection that the Battle Staff Noncommissioned Officer Course can control.

The result is a new clarity in photo transmission for students, as well as a staff of instructors excited to deliver the next generation of VTT with enhanced equipment, said Master Sgt. Andrea Thomas, Video Teleconference manager and senior instructor, BSNCO.

"We are the controlling tower, if you will," Thomas said. "It will be easier, and it saves the Army money. This equipment is phenomenal. Our old equipment, you kind of had to patch it up and keep it going. We were well overdue."

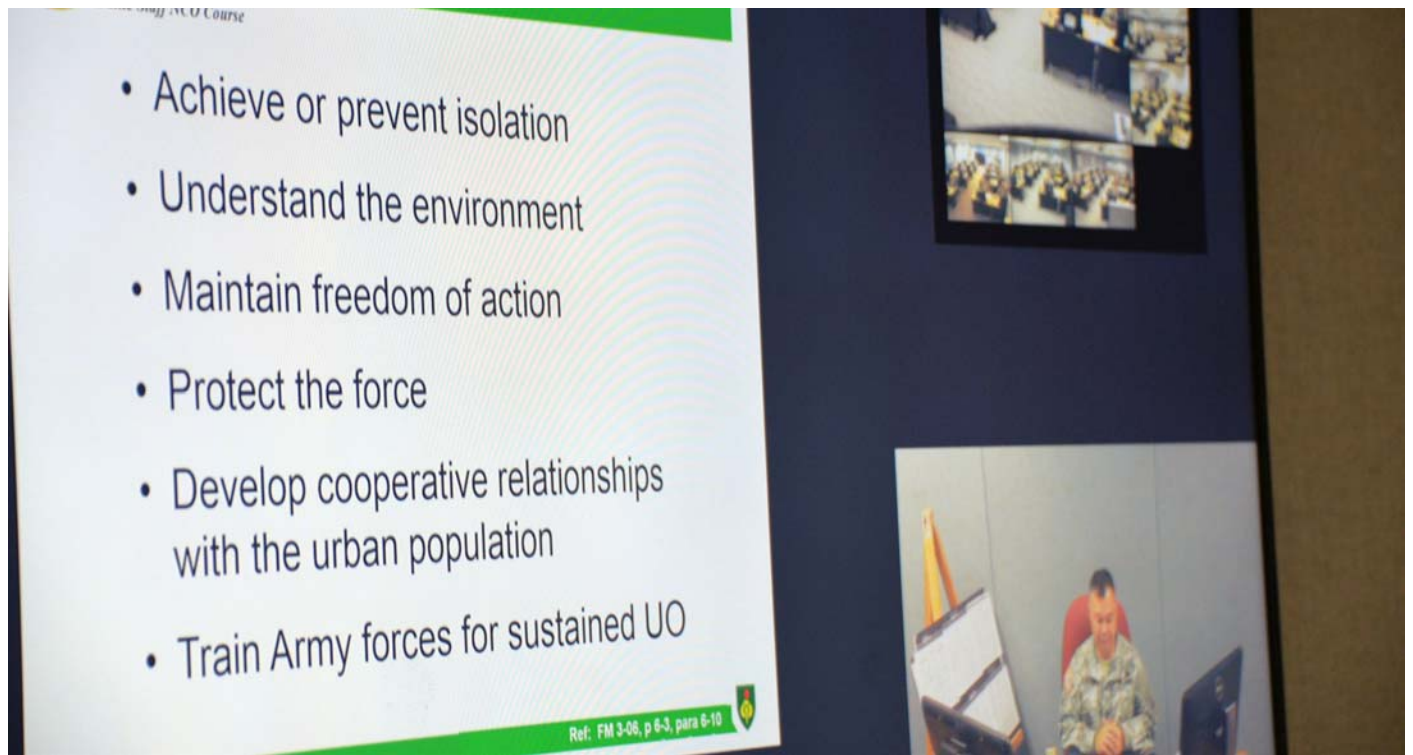
The new equipment will ease operations and help get instructors back to the fast-paced business of training the future leaders of the Army.

"I love it; it's back-to-back-to-back classes," Thomas said. "It's a phenomenal course, and you get to train NCOs. What is better than that?"

"It's been a good experience being an instructor and sharing the knowledge and my experience with the fellow noncommissioned officer out there in the field," said Sgt. 1st Class Khambao Mounlasy, VTT instructor. "It's fun. I learn new things every day from the students as well."

Because they are transmitting remotely, VTT instructors have experienced their fair share of technical difficulties.





The enhanced VTT equipment offers the nonresident training program of the Battle Staff Noncommissioned Officer Course a new clarity in photo transmission, instructors say. (Photo by Martha C. Koester / NCO Journal)

“We have to have a back-up plan because Murphy’s Law has littered our course with everything you could think of,” Thomas said. “In the wintertime, our East Coast folks at posts such as Fort Drum, New York, and Fort Bragg, North Carolina, have bad weather and a lot of connectivity issues. We have seen it all. We have been quite talented in working around those issues, and we have accomplished the mission every time — graduating as many NCOs as possible. That is the goal, and that is what we are here for.”

Thomas said the support of USASMA’s leadership helped the success of the Battle Staff Noncommissioned Officer Course.

“I am thankful that we have the leadership that we have [at USASMA] because they are very supportive,” she said. “And the team we work with — we know there is a chain of command to follow, but we all treat each other as peers and that’s what works.”

Thomas said the experience she has gained as part of BSNCO will serve her well as she transitions out of the Army. “The leadership, networking and being able to connect to people and seeing what works in the organization [has benefited me],” Thomas said. “I was able to get all of those tools working here in the Battle Staff.”